GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:6411
ANSWERED ON:12.04.2017
Paid News
Singh Shri Rama Kishore

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) the details of complaints received about paid news in electronic and print media and those lodged by the Press Council of India by taking self-cognizance thereof;
(b) whether it has not been possible to check this trend for lack of any special law on paid news and if so, the details thereof; and
(c) whether the Government proposes to frame any law or policy to check paid news and amend the Press Council Act as per the recommendations of the Election Commission of India and if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING [COL RAJYAVARDHAN RATHORE (Retd.)]

(a) Press Council of India (PCI), a statutory autonomous body established under the Press Council Act, 1978, received 600 cases of Paid News, which were forwarded by ECI and others against various newspapers from the Year 2014 and were decided by PCI. So far as electronic media is concerned, no specific instance of paid news in electronic media (private TV Channels) has come to the notice of this Ministry.

(b) & (c): PCI has created public awareness on the issue by putting its guidelines advising media and authorities on election process in public domain. Regarding electronic media, as per existing regulatory framework, private satellite TV channels are required to adhere to the Programme and Advertising Codes prescribed under the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995 and Cable Television Network Rules, 1994 framed thereunder which contain a gamut of criteria to be followed while carrying programmes and advertisement in such TV channels. The Advertising Code mentions that any advertisement should be clearly distinguished from programme.
Contdâ€¦2/-

In addition, ECI has formulated various guidelines to restrict paid news during elections. The Commission vide its comprehensive guideline on paid news dated 27th August, 2012 has constituted District level and State level Media Certification and Monitoring Committees (MCMC). The MCMC examines all the newspapers, print media, electronic media, cable networks etc. and keep records of the advertisements, advertorials, discussions and interviews relating to the candidates and parties. In addition, the Commission has also constituted a Committee at its own level to examine references from State level MCMCs and to support policy formulation for issues related to paid news and those related to usage of electronic and print media for campaigning by parties and candidates.
After a case is established as confirmed case of Paid News, the same is forwarded to Press Council of India in case of print media and to News Broadcasters Association (NBA) in case of electronic media for appropriate action against involved media house. The Commission also issues a Press Note in all the general elections starting from the year 2012 for Media to be observed during elections. This Press Note incorporates the guidelines issues by the Press Council of India and NBA for print and electronic media respectively. The Election Commission of India has not recommended any amendment in the Press Council Act, 1978 but the Commission has already written to Ministry of Law & Justice vide its letter dated 3rd February, 2011 for necessary amendment in Representation of People Act to make Paid News an electoral offence.

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